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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (6/11): POSITIVE REACTION TO  
ABBAS' CALL FOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE

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Main Stories:  
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Al-Quds' front page leads with an architect's rendering of a new Israeli neighborhood to be built in East Jerusalem's Ras al-Amud, near the Dome of the Rock mosque. According to Al-Quds, the construction is part of the Israeli, "campaign to Judanize the area around the mosque." According to the dailies, an unnamed Palestinian Authority official criticized the plan and stated that it will, "negatively affect" the peace process. The official also invited observers to note the timing of the news just before the visit of Secretary Rice to the region. In related news, the front pages highlight that, "Israeli authorities demolished three houses in the Jerusalem area on June 10 because they lacked building permits."

Front pages run a June 10 interview with Palestinian Premier Fayyad.

Al-Quds reports Fayyad commenting that, "the siege on Gaza is a 'huge headache' and we are making every effort to end it." Al-Ayyam reports that Fayyad states, "the priority is to halt settlement activity," adding that, "reaching an agreement will not be possible this year." Al-Hayat Al-Jadida focuses on Fayyad's call to, "form a 'temporary' national government that will include all parties until early elections are held." All papers note that Fayyad explained that if tax revenues are transferred by the Israelis to the Palestinian Authority, salaries for May will be paid to 150,000 civil servants.

In foreign assistance news, the dailies note that the EU approved 23 million Euros in direct aid to the Palestinian Authority which was used on June 10 to pay pensions and salaries to 73,000 Palestinians.

Papers also carry positive coverage of a June 10 agreement between

Palestinian Premier Fayyad and the World Bank for \$40 million of assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

Headlines in all dailies announce that Egypt will "soon" host talks among Palestinian parties. The dailies quote Hamas leader Khaled Masha'al confirming that Hamas representatives recently met with other Palestinian factions in Damascus to discuss Palestinian reconciliation. Meanwhile, reporting about a possible Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip continues to capture headlines.

Papers note that the Israeli Government is still discussing the option. Related front page coverage reports that three "Palestinian activists" were killed in two separate Israeli operations targeting Gaza City on June 10.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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¶1. Al-Ayyam carries an op-ed by veteran columnist Hamada Faranah entitled, "Abu Mazen [Abbas] will stay his course" (6/11): "...The power of Abu Mazen lies in the clarity of his positions regarding what he considers to be in the true interest of his people. Therefore, he did not hesitate to state that he wants Hamas to be a partner in Palestinian decision making... Abu Mazen wants Hamas to play a constructive role [in supporting the goals of] the Palestinians. He is also trying to rescue it from its extreme leadership, because as he said, it is a major part of the Palestinian people and many people trust it..."

¶2. Izzat Daraghmah commented in official Al-Hayat Al-Jadida under the title, "President [Abbas'] initiative is a victory for the [Palestinian] People," (6/11): "No one can disparage the integrity and good intentions of President Abbas in his attempt to restore the

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situation in Gaza to the time before June of last year. Likewise, no one can deny that the President's initiative [for national reconciliation with Hamas] has angered the American administration and leaders of the Israeli occupation.... What is needed now from everyone is resistance to American and Israeli pressure as well as to the attempts by any parties and countries... that only care about their own interests and agendas. Only then will the Palestinian people breathe a sigh of relief and feel hopeful about the success of dialogue and reconciliation among [the Palestinian factions.]"

WALLES